

§ 1.5 Public access to certain materials.

(a) In accordance with 5 U.S.C. 552(a)(2), each agency within the Department shall make the following materials available for public inspection and copying (unless they are promptly published and copies offered for sale):

(1) Final opinions, including concurring and dissenting opinions, as well as orders, made in the adjudication of cases;

(2) Those statements of policy and interpretation which have been adopted by the agency and are not published in the FEDERAL REGISTER; and

(3) Administrative staff manuals and instructions to staff that affect a member of the public.

(b) Each agency of the Department shall maintain and make available for public inspection and copying current indexes providing identifying information regarding any matter issued, adopted, or promulgated after July 4, 1967, and required by paragraph (a) of this section to be made available or published. Each agency shall publish and make available for distribution copies of such indexes and supplements to such indexes at least quarterly, unless it determines by notice published in the FEDERAL REGISTER that publication would be unnecessary and impracticable. After issuance of such notice, the agency shall provide copies of any index upon request at a cost not to exceed the direct cost of duplication.

[52 FR 49386, Dec. 31, 1987, as amended at 62 FR 33978, June 24, 1997]

§ 1.6 Requests for records.

(a) Any person who wishes to inspect or obtain copies of any record of any agency of the Department shall submit a request in writing and address the request to the official designated in regulations promulgated by the agency. The requester may ask for a fee waiver. To inspect or obtain copies of records of the Office of the Secretary or the Office of Communications, requesters should submit their requests to the Director of Communications, Office of Communications, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, DC 20250. All such requests for records shall be deemed to have been made pursuant to

the Freedom of Information Act, regardless of whether the Freedom of Information Act is specifically mentioned. To facilitate processing of a request, the phrase "FOIA REQUEST" should be placed in capital letters on the front of the envelope.

(b) A request must reasonably describe the records to enable agency personnel to locate them with reasonable effort. Where possible, a requester should supply specific information regarding dates, titles, names of individuals, names of offices, and names of agencies or other organizations that may help identify the records. If the request relates to a matter in pending litigation, the court and its location should be identified.

(c) If an agency determines that a request does not reasonably describe the records, the agency shall inform the requester of this fact and extend the requester an opportunity to clarify the request or to confer promptly with knowledgeable agency personnel to attempt to identify the records the requester is seeking. The "date of receipt" in such instances, for purposes of § 1.12(a), shall be the date of receipt of the amended or clarified request.

(d) Nothing in this subpart shall be interpreted to preclude an agency from honoring an oral request for information, but, if the requester is dissatisfied with the response, the agency official involved shall advise the requester to submit a written request in accordance with paragraph (a) of this section. The "date of receipt" of such a request for purposes of § 1.12(a) shall be the date of receipt of the written request. For recordkeeping purposes, an agency responding to an oral request for information may ask the requester to also submit his or her request in writing.

(e) If a request for records or a fee waiver, made under this subpart, is denied, the requester shall have the right to appeal the denial. Requesters also may appeal agency determinations of a requester's status for purposes of fee levels under section 5 of appendix A of this subpart. All appeals must be in writing and addressed to the official designated in regulations promulgated by the agency which denied the request. To facilitate processing of an appeal, the phrase "FOIA APPEAL"

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should be placed in capital letters on the front of the envelope.

(f) Requests that are not addressed to a specific agency in USDA, or which pertain to more than one USDA agency, or which are sent to the wrong agency of USDA, should be forwarded to the Department's central processing unit for FOIA in the Office of Communications, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, DC 20250.

(g) The central processing unit will determine which agency or agencies should process the request, and, where necessary, refer the request to the appropriate agency or agencies. The central processing unit in the Office of Communications will also, where necessary, notify the requester of the referral and of the name of each agency to which the request has been referred.

(h) Each agency shall develop and maintain a record of all written and oral requests and appeals received in that agency. The record shall include the name of the requester; a brief summary of the information requested; whether the request or appeal was granted, denied, or partially denied; the exemption from mandatory disclosure under 5 U.S.C. 552(b) upon which any denial was based; and the amount of any fees associated with the request or appeal.

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§ 1.7 Aggregating requests.

When an agency reasonably believes that a requester, or a group of requesters acting in concert, is attempting to break a request down into a series of requests for the purpose of evading the assessment of fees, the agency may aggregate any such requests and charge accordingly. One element which may be considered in determining whether such a belief would be reasonable is the time period in which the requests have occurred.

§ 1.8 Agency response to requests for records.

(a) 5 U.S.C. 552(a)(6)(A)(i) provides that each agency of the Department to which a request for records or a fee waiver is submitted in accordance with § 1.6(a) shall inform the requester of its determination concerning that request

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within 10 days of its date of receipt (excepting Saturdays, Sundays, and legal public holidays), plus any extension authorized under § 1.14. If the agency determines to grant the request, it shall inform the requester of any conditions surrounding the granting of the request (e.g., payment of fees) and the approximate date upon which compliance will be effected. If the agency grants only a portion of the request, it shall treat the portion not granted as a denial. If the agency determines to deny the request in part or in whole, it shall immediately inform the requester of that decision and of the following:

(1) The reasons for the denial;

(2) The name and title or position of each person responsible for denial of the request;

(3) The requester's right to appeal such denial and the title and address of the official to whom such appeal is to be addressed; and

(4) The requirement that such appeal be made within 45 days of the date of the denial.

(b) In the event the records requested contain some portions which are exempt from mandatory disclosure and others which are not, the official responding to the request shall ensure that all reasonably segregable non-exempt portions are disclosed, and that all exempt portions are identified according to the specific exemption or exemptions which are applicable.

(c) If the reason for not fulfilling a request is that the records requested are in the custody of another agency outside USDA, the agency shall inform the requester of this fact and shall forward the request to that agency or Department for processing in accordance with its regulations. If the agency has no knowledge of requested records or if no records exist, the agency shall notify the requester of that fact.

(d) 5 U.S.C. 552(a)(6)(A)(ii) provides that each agency in the Department to which an appeal of a denial is submitted in accordance with § 1.6(e) shall inform the requester of its determination concerning that appeal within 20 days (excepting Saturdays, Sundays, and legal public holidays), plus any extension authorized by § 1.14, of its date of receipt. If the agency determines to